



## 2021 WPRA annual meeting tackles housing crisis

### Members elect board; board presents awards

**O**n the evening of May 27, the West Pasadena Residents' Association convened its 2021 annual membership meeting, online for the second year.

The theme of the Zoom meeting was "The Housing Crisis: How do we build our way out of the affordable housing shortage?"

Program director and moderator Avram Gold, WPRA vice president/Communications, assembled a team of experts comprising elected officials, a member of city staff, and two nonprofit developers to examine the topic from a number of critical angles.

**Special awards:** The WPRA, when moved by exceptional service to the community and city, bestows a special commendation to deserving individuals and/or organizations.

This year the WPRA presented Community Service Awards to Rosa Laveaga, our city's former Arroyo Seco project supervisor, and to Priscilla Taylor, who recently retired from the WPRA board of directors after 26 years.

**Board election:** During the meeting, members also elected its board of directors. Directors for the 2021-2022 fiscal year are (alphabetically):

- |                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Geoffrey Baum | ▪ Mic Hansen        |
| ▪ Dan Beal      | ▪ Kenyon Harbison   |
| ▪ Dave Bise     | ▪ Joan Hearst       |
| ▪ Blaine Cavena | ▪ Susan Kinney      |
| ▪ Evan Davis    | ▪ Mark Mastromatteo |
| ▪ Pete Ewing    | ▪ Nancy Walker      |
| ▪ Avram Gold    | ▪ Linda Zinn        |



**WPRA presents Community Service Award to Rose Laveaga.** WPRA director Joan Hearst, left, presents Rosa Laveaga with a WPRA Community Service Award during its annual meeting on May 27. She was honored for her more than 25 years of dedication to our parks and the Arroyo Seco. *For the full story turn to page 10. (Photo by Avram Gold)*

*For the full story and additional coverage of the annual meeting, see pages 8-10*

#### Pasadena Mayor Victor Gordo

*"Affordable housing enriches diversity in Pasadena, and the recent pandemic drove home how important it is to have workforce housing nearby. We don't want firefighters, teachers and police officers living 90 miles away."*

#### District 6 Councilmember Steve Madison

*"Every [legislative] session we see scores of bills that are intended to control how local jurisdictions, like Pasadena, balance historic preservation and neighborhood compatibility with the demands for more and more housing."*

#### Miss our annual meeting?

Visit [wpra.net/topic/events](https://wpra.net/topic/events) for a description of the meeting and links to YouTube recordings.



# Bringing down the house

By Dan Beal  
President, WPRA

Thanks to all of you who joined us for our on-line annual meeting on May 27, and special thanks to participants Mayor Victor Gordo, Councilmember Steve Madison, County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, State Assemblymember Chris Holden, State Senator Anthony Portantino, Pasadena's Planning and Development Director David Reyes, and noted developers of non-profit housing Charles Loveman Jr. and Robin Hughes.

WPRA's annual meetings traditionally have included programs addressing major issues. In recent years, we tackled the fate of the 710 Freeway, homelessness, the future of the Arroyo Seco, and preparation and response to severe emergencies, to mention just a few.

This year's program, however, took issue engagement to new heights (I can praise the program since I had little to do with producing it). We examined the housing shortage, which affects the entire city of Pasadena, our county, the state (and much of urban America, for that matter) and how we might solve this important challenge.

This is a critical subject, and though it seems a bit wonky, it really hits many of us, literally,

where we live. Most of us agree that more housing is desperately needed for the homeless, low-income workers and many mid-income earners.

We've seen home-grown Pasadena-compatible solutions, like the ingenious proposal to repurpose more than 500 apartments for the "missing middle" — those whose incomes are too high for assistance, but too low for market-rate rental or purchase. [See page 4 for more on the "missing middle"]

On the other hand, we've seen proposals in Sacramento to allow 4, 6, 8 or even 10 market-rate units on former single-family lots, largely by for-profit developers, without being required to consider city or neighbor opposition, zoning codes, environmental impact, voter-approved limitations, infrastructure capacity (overloaded sewers, anyone?) or most anything else.

Whether or not you were able to hear the discussion at our annual meeting, please take a look at the summary starting on page 8. If you missed the meeting and would like to see it, it's available on YouTube. I believe you'll find it well worth your time. Simply visit [wptra.net/topic/events](http://wptra.net/topic/events) for a description of the meeting and links to YouTube recordings.

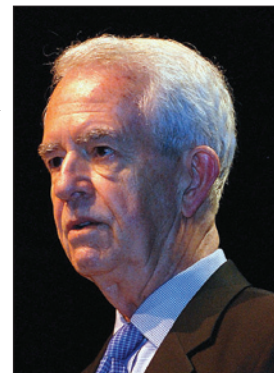
There will be more housing-related action in the next few months, so stay tuned. The workings

of the mayor-appointed Housing Task Force will assist in the October 2021 adoption of a new Housing Element of the General Plan (more wonkishness, I know, but lurking in there are state mandates for over 9,400 new housing units).

And, of course, there's the state legislature's continuing machinations. We'll stay engaged and keep you informed.

## On the brighter side

WPRA is able from time to time to use some savings in our budget to make small grants or contributions to worthy causes. Recently we donated \$2,000 to both Huntington Hospital Fund's recognition efforts for its front-line workers and to San Rafael Elementary School. With many of us getting ready to bust out of the COVID cave after so many months and spend money, please remember your favorite worthy organizations. They've struggled to stay afloat, too.



Dan Beal

## About us

### 2021 – 2022 officers

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[president@wptra.net](mailto:president@wptra.net)

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[adminvp@wptra.net](mailto:adminvp@wptra.net)

**Vice President/Communications:** Avram Gold  
[commvp@wptra.net](mailto:commvp@wptra.net)

**Treasurer:** Blaine Cavena  
[treasurer@wptra.net](mailto:treasurer@wptra.net)

**Secretary:** Kenyon Harbison  
[secretary@wptra.net](mailto:secretary@wptra.net)

**Mission:** Founded in 1962, the West Pasadena Residents' Association is dedicated to maintaining the character of our community and enhancing the quality of life in west Pasadena.

**Service area:** The WPRA service area is bounded on the north by Colorado Boulevard, on the east by Fair Oaks Avenue and on the south and west by the city limits.

### 2021 – 2022 board of directors

- Geoffrey Baum, *Rose Bowl & Central Arroyo Seco*
- Dave Bise, *Public services*
- Pete Ewing, *Land use & transportation*
- Mic Hansen
- Joan Hearst
- Susan Kinney
- Mark Mastromatteo
- Nancy Walker, *Public safety & traffic*
- Linda Zinn (membership@wptra.net)  
*Membership, Open Space & Conservation*

### 2021 – 2022 WPRA Advisory Board

- Justin Chapman
- Vince Farhat
- Tom Seifert
- Catherine Stringer
- Fred Zepeda



The News is mailed each quarter to nearly 8,000 homes and businesses in the 91105 and 91103 ZIP codes and beyond.

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All WPRA activities are funded through membership dues and contributions. The WPRA receives no public funding and has no paid employees. The WPRA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public benefit corporation. Contributions and donations are fully deductible to the extent permitted by law.



## On passing: Becky Wheeler



Becky Wheeler

**D**orothy Beck ("Becky") Wheeler, former Pasadena resident and self-styled citizen activist, died in her sleep on Friday, April 9, 2021, one month shy of her 94th birthday.

Becky was born to Dorothy and Bill Beck, raised in the Sacramento Delta, and attended the University of California (Berkeley), where she studied English and was a member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority. After graduating, she was the society editor of the *San Francisco News* and one of the first television reporters in the Bay area.

In 1953 she married Willard (Bill) Wall Wheeler Jr., of Carmel, California. They enjoyed 51 years together before Bill died in 2004. In Pasadena, Bill and Becky raised three daughters. A committed local activist, Becky (along with Marge Weller and others) worked to protect the community and local environment. She and Marge are also credited in 1962 with co-founding the West Pasadena Residents' Association (WPRA), which will celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year.

After Bill's retirement, the family returned to Becky's family home in Walnut Grove where she again immersed herself in local activities and civic engagement. An engaged conversationalist, she did not hesitate to ask: "So what are you doing with your life?" What she really meant was: "What are you reading?" "Where are you volunteering?" "What shared friend did you last see?"

Becky Wheeler is survived by her three daughters, Sarah Cobb, Kate Rock and Caroline Perkins; their husbands; and six grandchildren.

*Memorials in her honor may be made to Dr. Paul Barnes Community Park, PO Box 1122, Walnut Grove, CA 95690.*

# Remembering Becky Wheeler

*By Bill Bogaard  
Former Pasadena mayor  
and WPRA president*

**T**he passing of Becky Wheeler prompted many memories of my early experiences with WPRA and its commitment to maintain and enhance southwest Pasadena's unique quality of life. Today that commitment to quality of life is shared throughout the city.

In the early 1970s, soon after Claire and I moved to Pasadena, I received a call from Bud Clary, then president of the WPRA, inviting me to a neighborhood meeting. I forget what the issue was, but I was a new lawyer in Bud's Los Angeles law firm, so it did not take long for me to respond, "Sure, I'll be there."

Soon afterwards, I found myself serving as WPRA president, with a close and frequent working relationship with Becky Wheeler. My first impression that Bud Clary was "running the organization" had long been dispelled by the reality that Becky, Marge Weller and a few of their friends provided the drive and the daring of WPRA's commitment to protect the neighborhood.

Early on I had learned the urban legends that established WPRA's credibility. First, Becky and Marge's original organization defeated the U.S. Army in its attempt to occupy the Vista del Arroyo Hotel — now the U.S. Court of Appeals — as a military

center for inducting new soldiers into service from all of the southwest United States. To Becky and Marge, that didn't seem like the right fit, and they launched a neighborhood battle in opposition, highly unusual at the time. A year later, the *Pasadena Star-News* reported the final chapter of that battle under the headline, "ARMY DEFEATED."

A couple years later, the City Board (today's City Council) announced that it supported a developer's proposal to build two 14-story towers on the Elks Lodge parking at W. Colorado and S. Orange Grove. The City Board approved the project, notwithstanding vigorous opposition led by Becky, Marge and the neighbors representing what had become the West Pasadena Residents' Association. But that approval was temporary. The neighbors reversed the decision through a referendum, with the city-wide campaign opposing the project based in southwest Pasadena. Becky was a driving force.

Over ensuing years, the culture and commitment of WPRA to our quality of life became a guiding principle in southwest Pasadena and throughout the city. Becky Wheeler, a person of many accomplishments, was a pioneer in promoting Pasadena's neighborhood associations. We all owe her and her friends a huge debt of gratitude.



1956 in Pasadena: Marge Weller, left, with daughter Sarah (King); and Becky Wheeler, right, with daughter Sarah (Cobb)

## BRIEFLY

**C**ity selects citizens to serve on three new panels Pasadena City Council has selected citizens to serve on two new task forces and a permanent new commission, all charged with providing recommendations about three very important city issues.

**POLICE OVERSIGHT COMMISSION.** After passing an ordinance establishing the framework of a police oversight citizen commission last October, City Council in early June unanimously appointed 11 residents to this citizen commission. City Council also appointed Brian Maxey as independent police auditor. Commission members are (alphabetically):

- Alexis Abernethy,      ▪ Patricia Kinaga
- Florence Annang      ▪ Lawrence Lurvey
- Phillip J. Argento      ▪ Donald R. Matthews
- Noemi Emeric-Ford      ▪ Juliana Serrano
- Raul Ibanez      ▪ Barbara Stacy
- Esprit Jones

**REDISTRICTING TASK FORCE.** City Council has selected 12 residents to serve on this new task force. Its charge is to recommend changes to City Council district boundaries, as prompted by 2020 census data. Every 10 years district lines may have to be redrawn so that each district is substantially equal in population. Task force members are:

- Vince Farhat, chair (mayor's appointment)
- Rita Moreno, vice chair (at large)
- Geoffrey Baum (District 6)
- David Coher (District 1)
- Francis Chen (District 7)
- Adriana Lim (at large)
- Patrice Marshall McKenzie (at large)
- Margaret McAustin (District 2)
- Donald C. Nanney (District 4)
- Terry Tornek (District 3)
- Jordan Vannini (District 5)
- Delano Yarbrough (at large)

**HOUSING TASK FORCE.** Pasadena Mayor Victor Gordo has appointed Rick Cole, former Pasadena city manager and mayor, as special housing advisor, and a 17-member Housing Task Force. Initially, the group will be focused on housing policies, programs and funding strategy recommendations for the Planning Commission and City Council. Task force members are:

- Bill Bogaard, chair
- Leslie Barnes (CBO of PUSD)
- Joel Bryant (former District 3 Councilmember)
- Philip Burns
- Julianna Delgado
- Megan Foker
- Akila Gibbs
- Allison Henry
- Sarah Letts
- Anne Miskey (CEO of Union Station)
- Rita Moreno
- Phyllis Mueller
- Andrew Oliver
- Phlunté Riddle
- Stan Rushing
- Barry Storch
- J. Noel Toro

## Pasadena is preparing welcome mats for middle-income workforce renters

By Jim Wong, senior project manager  
City of Pasadena Housing Department

**T**he city of Pasadena is poised to add over 500 rental units to its affordable housing stock ... without turning a shovel.

The California Statewide Communities Development Authority (CSCDA), a joint-powers authority with a membership of over 530 public agencies, including Pasadena, is set to acquire two “Class A” multifamily communities totaling 513 units: The Hudson (173 units) at 678 E. Walnut St., and portions of the Westgate Apartments (340 units) at 231 S. DeLacey Ave. The two projects, built in 2016 and 2010, respectively, will be converted to provide long-term, affordable “missing middle” housing. As of this writing, closing on the two properties was scheduled for mid-June.

While most government-subsidized housing projects target families at low income or below, few programs address the affordable housing needs of the middle-income workforce.

This segment of the community includes nurses, teachers, construction tradespeople, and young professionals; people who earn too much to qualify for traditional “low-income” housing but not enough income to afford market-rate rents.

Under the CSCDA program, the maximum qualifying income for a three-person household ranges from \$81,120 to \$121,680, which is 80% to 120% of the county’s area median income (AMI).

Affordable rents for a two-bedroom unit, for example, would start at \$2,366 compared to the current average market rent of \$3,350.

Annual increases in the CSCDA affordable rents would be capped at the **lower** of:

1. 4%,
2. % change in the county AMI, or
3. % change in market rate rents.

*‘While most government-subsidized housing projects target families at low income or below, few programs address the affordable housing needs of the middle-income workforce.’*

This ensures that rents remain below market for the long term. Current tenants at The Hudson and Westgate Apartments who are not income-eligible (80% to 120% AMI) will not be displaced; they will continue to pay the market-rate rent until they choose to vacate their unit. As units become available, they will be leased to qualified tenants. CSCDA estimates that one-third of the current tenants at the Hudson and Westgate are income-eligible, and they would see immediate rent reductions. The conversion of all 513 units under program restrictions will take approximately three years.

Program funding comes from the CSCDA’s issuance of tax-exempt bonds to finance the acquisition of select multifamily properties for operation as middle-income housing. Public capital or rent subsidies are not involved. The city, as the host local agency, must forgo property tax revenues during the 30-year period that the bond debt is outstanding. However, the city stands to receive all net proceeds should the properties be resold, or hold control of the properties upon bond repayment.

Ultimately, the city benefits from the immediate availability of much needed middle-income housing placed within existing multifamily properties in a fraction of the four- to five-year timeframe typically required to finance and construct a new affordable housing project.



## BRIEFLY

**PASADENA POLICE CHIEF JOHN PEREZ** has announced that he will retire in 2022, ending a 36-year career at the department. *Source: Pasadena Star-News*

**ARA MALOYAN, WHO HELPED LEAD THE CITY'S PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT OUT OF AN EMBEZZLEMENT SCANDAL,** has retired after nearly six years on the job. Kris Markarian has been appointed acting director of the department. At the time of this writing, City Manager Steve Mermell hopes to have a permanent replacement for Maloyan by September.

*Source: Pasadena Now*

**THE CITY OF PASADENA PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT** was recently recognized as a statewide leader in customer service, innovation and excellence by the California Building Officials and the Structural Engineers Association of Southern California.

**SENATE BILL 15,** a measure authored by state Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D-Pasadena) to offer incentives to cities that convert abandoned retail sites into affordable and workforce housing, would let cities rezone idle commercial properties for affordable housing, and collect 7 years of estimated sales tax the vacant stores might otherwise have generated. *Source: Pasadena Now*

**FORMER PASADENA MAYOR RICK COLE** has been chosen as the next executive director of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), the organization announced on Tuesday. Cole was recently named special housing adviser to Mayor Victor Gordo. *Source: Pasadena Now*

**UTAH-BASED IVORY INNOVATIONS** has selected the city of Pasadena's Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) program as a Top 10 finalist for the 2021 Ivory Prize for Housing Affordability, a national award recognizing ambitious, feasible, and scalable solutions to housing affordability.

**AFTER SUSPENDING THE COLLECTION OF LATE FEES AND SERVICE SHUTOFFS** for nonpayment for more than a year, the Pasadena Water and Power Department plans to resume collecting late fees in July and cutting off service for nonpayment in September.

**CITY COUNCIL WILL RESUME THE COLLECTION OF PARKING AND TRANSIT-RELATED FEES AND FINES,** as well as late fees and payments for other city services, including refuse collection, sewer maintenance, and the Utility Underground Surtax and utility user's tax.

## Pasadena Avenue on National Register

*By Sue Mossman  
Executive Director*

**W**e are delighted to announce that the Pasadena Avenue Historic District, part of the 710 corridor, has been officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nominated by Pasadena Heritage. This listing not only recognizes the neighborhood as an important historic place, but will also provide extra protections and benefits for the nearly 100 historic homes within the district now and when they are eventually sold.

The newly approved district, between Bellefontaine to Columbia, is immediately south of the already designated Markham Place Historic District that covers the northern part of the original 710 corridor. Together they encompass scores of historic homes that were acquired by Caltrans in the days when a surface freeway, and then a tunnel, were proposed to extend the 710 freeway north through some of Pasadena's oldest established neighborhoods.

Pasadena Heritage will host a tour of the district in July for its Heritage Associates members. After that event, a series of talks about the 710 corridor — past, present and future — is in the planning stages, co-hosted by Arlington Garden and Pasadena Heritage in late July and August. A self-guided tour, highlighting a number of the significant homes will be part of both events.

#### City agrees to reconsider Colorado Street Bridge fencing

After seeing full-scale mock-ups of potential suicide deterrent fencing installed on the iconic Colorado Street Bridge, Pasadena Heritage, WPRA [See related WPRA letter on page 7.] and others urged the city to take another look at potential solutions while protecting the architectural integrity of the bridge. The Public Works Department posted an online survey for the public to respond after looking at the options, and the results were largely negative.

As a result, Public Works has indicated it is willing to discuss what other options might be feasible. That process is just beginning, and we look forward to exploring what might be a better solution to marrying an



effective barrier with the original design of the landmark bridge.

#### Save the date for a celebration

Pasadena Heritage has acquired the 1905 Blinn House, former home of the Women's City Club for 75 years, located at 160 N. Oakland Ave. After some significant rehabilitation and restoration projects are completed, the organization looks forward to holding a grand-opening celebration on Sunday, October 10. Invitations will be sent in August for the house-warming party, which will spread out over the Blinn House grounds and into the Ford Place Historic District and Fuller Seminary campus which surrounds the house. Please save the date and join us to begin a new chapter for the 44-year-old preservation organization.

#### Rose Bowl financial challenges must be met

The Rose Bowl Operating Company and stadium management recently presented a challenging financial picture for the nearly 100-year-old stadium to City Council and other stakeholders. The economic impact of the pandemic has hit the Rose Bowl hard, with lost revenue from previously profitable sports, events and concerts, which together were paying the debt service for the Rose Bowl improvement projects already completed and still planned. The city is looking to find sources of revenue to pick up the tab on that debt service. But a short-term deficit should not drive changes that detract from the essence of this legendary historic place.

Pasadena Heritage is particularly concerned that the Rose Bowl's National Historic Landmark designation be fully considered at every turn. Creative solutions will be needed, but new construction that would impact the historic stadium should be off the table. One of Pasadena's most recognized and storied historic places, the Rose Bowl must be honored and celebrated as we collectively plan for a financially successful future.

# California's housing goals for Pasadena defy logic

In 1969 California mandated that all cities, towns and counties must plan for the housing needs of their population at all income levels. This state mandate is called the Housing Element and Regional Housing Needs Allocation, or RHNA. To be able to fulfill this requirement, each municipality or county must develop a Housing Element as part of its General Plan that explicitly shows how it will meet its housing needs. There are many laws and processes that govern how this is done, and collectively they are known as Housing Element Law.

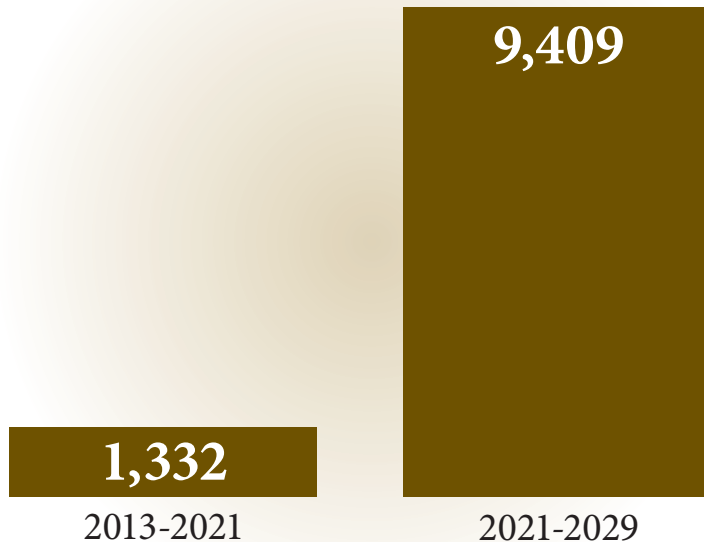
State Housing and Community Development Department (HCD, the California agency that oversees the process) assigns mandated numbers regionally: in Pasadena's case, to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), which comprises six counties and, in turn, assigns specific numbers to its counties and cities.

The current cycle was from October 15, 2013 to October 15, 2021. The upcoming RHNA allocation cycle covers the planning period of October 2021 through October 2029. For the cycle just expiring, Pasadena's total allocation was 1,332 units, but the upcoming nine-year cycle requirement is 9,409, which is a 600% increase. *[See accompanying chart]* Pasadena appealed this high number to SCAG, but the appeal was rejected.

For the state, the California legislature is demanding the construction of 3.5 million new housing units by 2025, using as its foundation a study based on New York data. Some believe that Texas data would yield a more suitable benchmark for California.

The Embarcadero Institute's recent study, using Texas as a benchmark, puts the number needed for new California housing units at 1.5 million, **NOT** 3.5 million. To test its model, the institute conducted a second study employing the "housing per-capita" model, which included all 50 states. This second method yielded a projection of 1.4 million new housing units needed for

## Pasadena's RHNA Housing Allocation



For the six-year 2014-2019 cycle, Pasadena's total allocation was 1,332 housing units, but the upcoming nine-year cycle requirement is 9,409 — a 600% increase.

California. And yet to test a third time, "the average household size" model was used, and this alternative yielded the need as 1.3 million.

Pasadena's population increase has been gradual. In fact, between 2017 and 2021, Pasadena lost approximately 3,000 residents, and has a current population of approximately 140,000. The projected population of Pasadena for the year 2040 is 150,000. In other words, RHNA numbers project Pasadena will add 250% more population in eight years than it has in the last 30 years. Given these numbers, the HCD/SCAG mandated number of 9,409 units between this year and 2029 clearly appears excessive.

To meet the RHNA requirement 87 new housing units would have to be built in Pasadena every month, without fail, for the next 108 months (nine years), according to a *Pasadena Now* article. Note also, developers build; the city can facilitate, but not build. The California Legislature, as of this writing, has yet four more bills in this cycle that directly address cities not meeting their RHNA requirements: AB 215, AB

To meet the RHNA requirement 87 new housing units would have to be built in Pasadena every month, without fail, for the next 108 months (nine years)

617, AB 1258, and SB 477. AB 215 is the most onerous in that it creates policing for compliance and imposes fines from \$10,000 to \$600,000 for cities that do not meet the thresholds, regardless of the size of the municipality. Essentially, this would create an additional tax for property owners. SB 477 also establishes a housing police and imposes a costly and burdensome reporting requirement on cities.

Unrealistic and excessive RHNA requirements, coupled with one-size-fits-all legislative mandates that usurp local management of land-use and housing decisions and create a punitive environment, does **NOT** help alleviate the perceived housing shortage — nor effectively mitigate the lack of affordability.

# WPRA provides feedback on bridge options, SB 9

## Bridge options are ‘myopic’

*[Editor’s note: The WPRA board of directors on June 8, 2021 sent this letter to Pasadena City Council regarding the city’s most recent attempts to discourage suicide attempts from the Colorado Street Bridge.]*

The West Pasadena Residents’ Association shares the city’s concerns about reducing suicides at the Colorado Street Bridge, both for the benefit of the persons contemplating suicide as well as the residents near and below the bridge. However, the WPRA is concerned that the city’s consultants viewed their role myopically, ignored aesthetics, and failed to fully consider effective solutions that would not ruin one of the City’s most-beautiful historic landmarks.

As a result, the WPRA requests that the city delay implementation of the current options for suicide-detering vertical barrier enhancements to the Colorado Street Bridge, and continue to conduct an in-depth review of alternatives, including any technologies that could replace the physical barriers, or enhance a reduced height of those barriers.

After more than four years of research and outreach, the Department of Public Works and the consultants have presented three options for vertical barrier enhancements to the bridge. However, there appear to be several flaws to those options.

The goal of the vertical barrier was to eliminate suicides from the bridge. Both Public Works and the consultants have stated that the barriers will not be 100% effective. They estimate 90% effectiveness, but understandably cannot be sure. Further, one of the options is the “picket” option, which the consultants have said can be scaled. It is unclear, then, why this option was submitted.

All options are vertical only, with some flawed assumptions. The heights presented (8, 9 or 10 feet) were essentially assumptions. The consultants assumed that a 6’ person could jump 2’ and grab a horizontal surface. Plenty can jump higher than 24 inches, particularly with a running start that is possible on a bridge.

Whatever is done to the bridge is most likely a 50+ year decision. The options are described as “reversible,” but given the reported cost estimates in the millions of dollars, there may be no practical way to reverse the barrier installation.

## SB 9 is ‘excessive ... and fatally flawed’

*[Editor’s note: The WPRA board of directors on June 4, 2021 sent this letter regarding Senate Bill 9 to the Local Government Committee of the California State Assembly.]*

The WPRA strongly opposes SB 9 as an excessive, misguided and fatally flawed attempt to pre-empt local land use decisions, with the outcome of promoting market rate housing at the expense of homeowners, renters, neighborhoods and the critical goal of producing very low-, low- and moderate-income housing.

SB 9 is not an equity bill. It is the exact opposite. Its emphasis on expensive market-rate construction would constitute an unprecedented and destabilizing attack on 7 million California single-family households with 20 million residents — white, Black, Latino and Asian — at all income levels.

NONE of the units constructed under SB 9 will be required to be affordable. Any benefit to low- and moderate-income families is purported to be through the thoroughly-discredited “trickle-down” theory, an economic failure of no more benefit in housing as in any other endeavor.

SB 9 is deceptively misrepresented as a minimally-impactful “duplex” bill, but in fact between lot splits, duplexing on the split lots, and allowing accessory dwelling units, as many as six or even eight units — four full homes and four accessory units — could be built on one former lot.

While promoted as housing relief, in fact neighborhoods of all income levels are threatened with excessive development and in many cases, gentrification as well. Street parking, fire safety and our beautiful trees would also be at risk. Fanciful justifications based on transit and car sharing will not make up for the loss of vehicle use that so many working people and families depend upon.

SB 9 would not benefit the hard-working people of California but instead profits developers and foreign and domestic investment entities.

WPRA urges you to oppose this attempt to promote unacceptable and destructive concepts. WPRA understands and supports the critical need for additional affordable housing in California, but not through mass bulldozing of neighborhoods. There are better solutions than statewide, cookie-cutter giveaways to developers.



# Elected officials comment on housing challenges

By Chuck Hudson  
Editor

**P**rogram moderator Avram Gold opened this first portion of the business program by identifying the theme: “**The housing crisis. How can we build our way out of the housing inventory shortage? And how do we respond to the affordable housing challenge?**” Gold invited four elected officials to comment on the city’s current housing position and challenges. *[Editor’s note: Their responses are paraphrased to meet newsletter space limitations; however, direct citations are indicated by quotation marks.]*

## **Pasadena Mayor Victor Gordo:**

“Affordable housing enriches our diversity in Pasadena,” and the pandemic “drove home how important it is to have workforce housing nearby. We don’t want our firefighters, teachers and police officers living 90 miles away and having to commute in emergency. Restaurants and other retail businesses also want a workforce that’s close by.”

Within the city of Pasadena about 3,044 units have been built since 2012. Of those, 2,756 were rental units, 288 were owned units. By income, 264 were low-income units, 524 were moderate-income units, and about 980 were Section 8 (government subsidized) units. “But what we’ve seen is that walls and a roof “are not always enough.” Some of who need housing assistance also require additional support — “all of the things that can help a family or an individual become successful.

“I don’t think we can build our way out of this crisis, nor frankly do we want to build our way out. That would have a tremendous impact in other ways for the community.” It’s possible, however, that the city may be able to help “rehabilitate and reinvigorate properties when the property owners don’t have resources to invest.” Additionally, “another opportunity is to repurpose commercial and retail spaces into housing where appropriate.”

## **District 6 Councilmember Steve**

**Madison:** Today’s “dominant issue is



Victor Gordo



Steve Madison



Kathryn Barger



Chris Holden

related to local control of zoning decisions and, in particular, the legislature’s emphasis on transit-oriented housing development and affordable housing. Every [legislative] session “we see scores of bills that are intended to control how local jurisdictions, like Pasadena, balance the quality of life, historic preservation and neighborhood compatibility with the demands of the region and of the state for more and more housing. This state trend, “no matter how well intentioned, threatens local control, and to many of us, this feels like the state is attempting to change the quality of life in our neighborhoods.”

## **Kathryn Barger, LA County District 5**

**Supervisor:** “There is no question that this housing crisis is permeating every corner of the county.” That’s why “collaboration must be at the state and other levels. The issue

has many moving parts. We can’t rely on a one-size-fits-all solution. Every strategy to combat this crisis must be tailored to meet the local need.” The state’s efforts to drive new housing construction “may be well-intentioned, but are completely misguided. Sacramento will not solve this from 500 miles away. We’ll solve it here, together.”

## **Chris Holden, State Assemblymember**

**(D-41):** Solutions to this problem will not come from just one area of government. It’ll come from state, county, and local cities. “We must try to address the issue with equity, fairness and balance to preserve the integrity of our communities, while increasing affordable housing production. We’re working closely with members of the LA County delegation, focusing not just on affordable housing, but also those who are on the bubble and could end up homeless.”



**WPRA honors Priscilla Taylor for her 26 years of community service.** During the May 27 annual meeting, WPRA President Dan Beal, in above photo, honored Priscilla Taylor with a Community Service Award. Priscilla joined the WPRA board in 1994, a position she maintained until her retirement last year. She worked on a number of important WPRA and city initiatives. *(Photo by Avram Gold)*



# Experts panel discusses path forward for more affordable housing

By Chuck Hudson  
Editor

**A**vram Gold also formed a panel comprising four housing and legislative experts. The format for this portion of the program took on more of a Q&A format, with Avram Gold asking (in italics) and (surprise!) panelists answering.

**Avram Gold:** *Each of our panelists is actively engaged in finding ways to reverse the housing shortage for both the low- to moderate-income tenants or owners. Sen. Portantino, please share with us your observations, from a legislative point of view, about the housing situation?*

**State Senator Anthony Portantino (D-25):** “Frankly, one of my frustrations, when it comes to the housing legislation coming from Sacramento, is that the state doesn’t recognize cities, such as Pasadena, that do things well.”

Also, many of the housing issues we’re dealing with now were triggered a decade ago, when the legislature dismantled and defunded local redevelopment agencies. “This move took \$12-\$15 billion off the table — money that could have been spent on affordable housing. And here we are, over a decade later, and we still haven’t created a viable alternative.”

**Avram Gold:** *We’ve seen a lot of new housing bills from Sacramento, many of which challenge our own zoning laws. David, how does your department deal with this?*

**David Reyes, Director, Pasadena Planning and Community Development:** The state auditor last November wrote: ‘California is failing to build enough affordable homes for lower income residents, in part, because the state lacks an effective approach to planning and financing for development of affordable housing in both the state and local level levels.’ Somehow this insight has been overlooked. “What the state’s tried to do, is to have this solved on the backs of local government.”



Anthony Portantino



David Reyes



Robin Hughes



Charles Loveman Jr.

The problem with this is that the state has both good and bad actors. Pasadena “is a pro-housing city. We were the first to have inclusionary housing.” Pasadena has “built in and around our commercial corridors and central district and has tried to protect and preserve our single-family neighborhoods. We’ve adopted many local solutions that, in our opinion, offer a better approach.”

Rather than reward these unique approaches that work, the legislature is imposing a one-size-fits-all approach throughout the state. “This erodes many local efforts and requires us “to develop projects that may not be consistent with community values.”

**Avram Gold:** *Robin, can you articulate the steps and time it takes from the conception of a project to the final opening?*

**Robin Hughes, President and CEO, Abode Communities:** “I’m very split. It’s wonderful to hear how committed the elected officials representing the Pasadena area, but, as a developer of affordable housing, I do value the tools that have come out of the state to get housing produced. This is a statewide *and* a regional issue. It requires thinking about how we can ensure that every community builds its fair share of affordable housing and addresses the range of housing needs.”

My firm’s “mission is to address the affordable housing needs of low-income working individuals in our region, and that is typically in the form of multifamily, low-to-mid income rental housing. A typical affordable-housing development is complex,

non-linear and can take anywhere from 24 to 36 months just to get through the site financing, acquisition, entitlement, design, and permitting phases, and then construction and leasing.”

**Avram Gold:** *What we haven’t yet discussed is the so-called “missing middle” [see article on page 4]: those who earn too much for subsidized housing, but not enough to afford market-rate housing. This group could, for example, include firefighters, teachers, nurses, police officers, teachers and delivery drivers. Charles Luckman serves those who wish to own homes in this segment. Charles, how do you do what you do?*

**Charles Loveman Jr., Executive Director, Heritage Housing Partners:** “We are a bit unique in the world of affordable housing, because we’re a homeownership developer.”

We hit a bump in the road about 10 years ago “when the state shut down the 400 local, state-funded redevelopment agencies. In other words, over the past 10 years, about \$12 billion has **not** been spent on housing by local agencies that would otherwise have funded housing construction that made sense for their respective city. So, for us, it’s become harder and harder to find financial support for what we do.” And much of what we do is for mixed-income from the missing-middle.

“We used to build about 200,000 housing units a year in California. Now we’re down

*Continued on page 10*

*Continued from page 9*

about 100,000 since the Great Recession in 2008-2009. That's a million units that didn't get built in California over the past 10 years. And no one's building enough for homeownership. "In the past many programs were available for both rental and homeownership. No longer.

"I've calculated that for every \$5 of affordable homeownership money, there's about \$100 for affordable rental. This state has a strong preference for rental properties. Let's not forget that every time we transform a renter into an owner, that leaves a vacant rental unit behind."

**Avram Gold:** *How can we put common sense back into the housing conversation in California?*

**Sen. Portantino:** "I'm frustrated, too. The challenge is that some cities are resistant, and we tend to legislate for the resistant cities, and then apply that legislation across the board. Legislators are also concerned that a city, to meet

state requirements, will put the affordable housing only in one neighborhood. Or we're afraid it won't be done fairly. I'd also have to say that the legislature lacks a fundamental understanding about how each California city is unique," and an unwillingness for legislators to make waivers for cities that meet the state-set objectives.

**Robin Hughes:** "The point that the senator just made around legislation that incentivizes and rewards cities for producing affordable housing is as important as accountability and regulating the cities that are not producing housing. So, how do we create legislative balance, not only in the streamlining and production bills, but also in the funding that comes down from Sacramento?"

**David Reyes:** "I like the idea of legislation that rewards the good actors, but I think what we need goes beyond that. Some bills should have carve-outs for cities that meet the standards by planning and zoning for multifamily housing and by reserving a certain percentage of their growth for multifamily housing. They actually need to

be exempted from some of these bills."

**Sen. Portantino:** "I agree. I haven't been able to get agreement on the carve-outs because there's an aversion to doing that. And so, you're 100% correct, we're just not there intellectually, because the mindset in the capital is that a carve-out is a reward. And they're so much into the punishment mode. They haven't gotten to the point of the reward mode for people doing the right thing."

"In the post-pandemic world we have lots of unoccupied commercial space that's perfect for affordable and workforce housing." In fact, I've recently introduced a bill that provides cities with the equivalent of "seven years of sales tax that would have been generated from that retail establishment, if it is converted into workforce and affordable housing."

**David Reyes:** "From where I sit there's no silver bullet." As for my department, "our way forward is to get the revised housing element adopted. If we don't complete that, we stand to lose local control" and funding.

## WPRA honors Rosa Laveaga for service, dedication

*By Tom Seifert  
Former WPRA president,  
Current WPRA Advisory Board member*

**T**he WPRA, during its 2021 annual meeting on May 27, honored Rosa Laveaga, the city of Pasadena's former Arroyo Seco project supervisor, for her 25+ years of service and dedication to Pasadena and to our community.

Rosa started her tenure at the city of Pasadena on a sunny day in June, 1995. She came to us wide-eyed and enthusiastic, equipped with a bachelor's degree in urban and environmental planning and a master's degree in landscape architecture, both from Cal-Poly Pomona.

Her first primary assignment: managing the Browning-Ferris Industries major mitigation project with the creation of the three low-flow streams and native plantings in the lower arroyo, significantly

enhancing the environment and creating a riparian habitat.

From the beginning, Rosa recognized that there are many stakeholders in the arroyo, both the permanent user groups and the more casual visitors who frequent the arroyo on a regular basis. She was able to deal with them all.

Another of her major accomplishments (actually five accomplishments) was to author and oversee the adoption of the three Arroyo Seco master plans, the Arroyo Seco design guidelines as well as creation of a "Guide to the Trails of the Lower Arroyo."

Her daily workload was varied and included such areas as park maintenance supervision, grant writing, planning and design, construction oversight, budget management and supervising and training the Arroyo Seco maintenance crews. Rosa brought both enthusiasm as well as curiosity to her work

... always looking for better and more efficient ways to improve the environment. Some of her other noteworthy accomplishments include:

- Restoring trails and streams in the Hahamongna area following a Caltrans accident during the construction of the 210 overpass. Rosa arranged for debris removal and charted stream improvement below the Devil's Gate Dam.
- Securing the funding and developing the conceptual design for Berkshire Creek, which was used as the template for the project's final construction.
- Obtaining six different grants for the Flint Wash Bridge and serving as its project manager during design development.

Rosa's vision and contributions will be incorporated into the future work of both the city of Pasadena and to the One Arroyo Foundation.



## BRIEFLY

### THE ARROYOS & FOOTHILLS

**CONSERVANCY** recently acquired a 3.5 acre preserve in a critical wildlife passage connecting the Verdugo Mountains and the San Rafael Hills. Located just above Verdugo Park in Glendale, the Sunshine Preserve represents hope for both wildlife and local residents. This recent acquisition – a donation from Fredrick Danelian, a long-time Glendale resident – brings to 79 acres across 13 properties that the conservancy oversees in our region. It has also acquired 40 acres in the Antelope Valley and has helped support other conservation organizations' acquisitions of an additional 125 acres in our region.

### THE LA COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT'S DEVIL'S GATE DAM

sediment removal project ("The Big Dig") is expected to be completed in November, a year ahead of the original schedule, according to the LA County Public Works Department. *Source: Pasadena Now.*

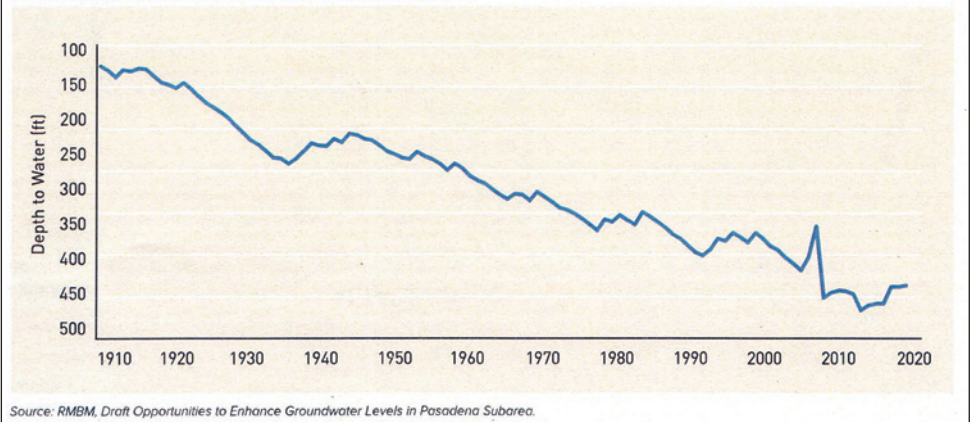
### THE SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (AQMD)

has approved a landmark rule that would require warehouses and, by extension, the diesel-fueled trucks serving them, to cut chronic air pollution linked to asthma, cancer and deaths in Southern California. Some describe the rule as a milestone in the fight for clean air. *Source: Press-Enterprise*

**THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES** has reduced its State Water Project (SWP) allocation to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) by 5% for the coming year. Pasadena gets about 61% of its water supply from MWD, 36% from groundwater from the Raymond Groundwater Basin, which is pumped out of 16 deep wells located throughout the city. The city purchases the remaining 3% from neighboring water agencies.

**PASADENA WATER AND POWER (PWP)** has launched its "Shape-Up Summer" campaign to encourage a 10% reduction in water use.

### Historic Pasadena Area Groundwater Levels



The steady decline of the groundwater level beneath Pasadena is unmistakable and jeopardizes the viability of the Raymond Basin as a water resource for the future.

## What went wrong with the Raymond Basin?

By Tim Brick  
Executive Director, Arroyo Seco Foundation

One of Pasadena's most important milestones in the last century was the Raymond Basin adjudication. A major advance in the science and governance of groundwater basins, it was widely praised as an exemplary model of cooperative self-government. It has determined the production of local groundwater for Pasadena and the western San Gabriel for eight decades. The Raymond Basin, our region's most valuable liquid asset, provides about half the water consumed locally.

But now the long-term health of the Raymond Basin is in peril.

The first water wells in Pasadena were drilled in 1881 at the southern end of the city near where the Raymond Hotel, a renowned resort, was located. Early residents saw ancient springs and water gushing to the surface in artesian wells, but they did not understand the relationship between those phenomena and the Raymond Dyke or earthquake fault that lined the lower limits of the city. Limited by the science of that era, they had only a primitive understanding of the nature of the Raymond Basin, the 40-square-mile groundwater basin or aquifer beneath Pasadena and surrounding communities.

The first full description of Raymond Basin's geology and underground water storage characteristics was not completed until 1934, and the findings were ominous. They

documented a consistent drawdown of the basin since the turn of the past century. Groundwater levels had fallen more than 100 feet.

In 1937 Pasadena initiated a discussion and then a lawsuit to establish a "safe yield" from the basin that would match pumping rights with natural replenishment from rainfall and stream water. The Raymond Basin Adjudication that resulted from *City of Pasadena v. City of Alhambra et al.* was the first groundwater adjudication or division of water rights in California.

The process began with a study that determined that local pumpers were drawing out 29,000 acre feet per year from the basin but that the safe yield was only 21,000 acre feet. While the approach was groundbreaking and there were lawsuits, the process was largely cooperative and culminated in local pumpers agreeing to cut back their pumping by about one-third.

Eleven years later, however, in 1955 after several years of abundant rainfall, Pasadena and the 14 other local pumpers re-adjusted the decreed safe yield to 30,622 acre-feet per year, *more than the historic use before the adjudication.*

Even though the 1955 decree anticipated that there would be further adjustments in the future based on actual conditions in the Raymond Basin, there has not been any

*Continued on page 13*



Roxie Mirabelle Forbes: a remarkable girl with a future as bright as the sun ... until it went dark

## Daughter's death prompts parents to advocate for drowning prevention

By Doug Forbes and Elena Matyas

**A**t 9 a.m. on June 28, 2019, we dropped off our 6-year-old daughter Roxie at an Altadena facility called Summerkids. By 10 a.m. we were standing over her blue, bloated body at Huntington Hospital. A remarkable girl with a future as bright as the sun abruptly became nothing more than a lifeless vessel.

Roxie died from a wholly preventable drowning in the small Summerkids pool. All Summerkids staffers at the small pool admitted under oath that they had not

received requisite American Red Cross lifeguard training or any testing. However, the owner and Red Cross instructor certified them as lifeguards nonetheless. The same goes for CPR and rescue training.

Advocacy has ruled our days ever since.

- We launched a nonprofit to eliminate preventable childhood drowning and named it Meow Meow Foundation in honor of Roxie's favorite feline comfort doll who was there for her through thick and thin.
- The foundation teamed with Assemblymember Chris Holden to pass

ACR-39, which declared every third week of May in California as "Roxie's Wish: Drowning Prevention Week for Children."

- The foundation recently released a seven-part online series of informative, entertaining episodes featuring US Reps. Adam Schiff, Judy Chu and Debbie Wasserman Schultz; LA Mayor Eric Garcetti; LA County Supervisors Hilda Solis and Kathryn Barger; nine Olympians; an Academy-Award-winning musician; and 100+ other stakeholders nationwide.
  - We also introduced AB 768 (Holden), which affords a formal drowning prevention policy and related resources to 6+ million California students through the Department of Education.
- Note: We encourage you to send a letter in support of this bill to our foundation or to Naima Ford, Assemblymember Holden's legislative director, at [naima.ford@asm.ca.gov](mailto:naima.ford@asm.ca.gov).*

### Does your pool meet current standards?

Many pools in Pasadena were built before the 2007 Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act became a federal law. This law requires all pools to have the proper anti-entrapment grates (ANSI/APSP-16) and at least two circulation suction outlets per pump. Also, the 1996 California Pool Safety Act (amended in 2018) requires at least two of seven safety barriers, such as an isolation fence and alarms.

These laws save lives. And so do other simple steps. (*See accompanying article*)

For more information, visit the Meow Meow Foundation website at [MeowMeowFoundation.org](http://MeowMeowFoundation.org) or call (323) 333-0384.

## It's time to face facts about preventable drownings

**C**alifornia has the nation's largest number of pools, let alone miles and miles of open-water coastline. Water is fun, but it can also be deadly. A healthy respect is a must.

- Preventable drowning is the leading cause of injury death for children 1-4 and second for those under 14.

- For every fatal drowning, at least five more children suffer nonfatal drownings, many of which lead to brain damage.
- 88% of childhood drownings occur under nearby adult supervision.
- Yet, only 1% of surveyed parents consider drowning to be a home safety concern.

- Never swim alone.
- Keep non-swimmers or learning swimmers within an arm's length.
- Use a Water Watcher at all times.
- Lifeguards are not child care providers. You are.



Continued from page 11

## What went wrong ...

change in the formula since then, except to approve several mechanisms such as storage programs and spreading credits that allow pumpers to augment their take.

Buoyed by the pride of accomplishment and the false promise of a “safe-yield” adjudication, local officials and residents have been blinded to the actual results of the adjudication. The steady decline of the groundwater level beneath Pasadena, now 250 feet lower than pre-adjudication, is unmistakable and jeopardizes the viability of the Raymond Basin as a water resource for the future.

The initial draft of Pasadena’s current Water System and Resources Program, now being considered, relies heavily on a series of programs that would increase groundwater pumping without providing for any systematic approach to stabilizing the groundwater level and protecting the Raymond Basin. That’s a historic mistake.

Pasadena needs to again take the lead and work with the other local pumpers in the Raymond Basin Management Board to make healing the Raymond Basin the first priority of local water planning. They need to work together to stabilize and replenish the groundwater level. It will be expensive, but the era of cheap water is over. An effective groundwater management program will also include an increased emphasis on conservation, water recycling, stormwater capture, stream restoration, native plant landscaping, storage programs and new sources to replenish the basin. This is the resilient way to meet our region’s future water needs.

Most important, pumping rights in the Raymond Basin need to be adjusted based on 21st century conditions and probable climate-change impacts to achieve the actual safe and sustainable yield for the future. It makes no sense in the era of climate change to manage local water resources with a failed formula from 1955.



Pasadena Senior Center’s free Scenic Walks Club gathers every Wednesday at 9 a.m. The leisurely strolls through picturesque local sites are among the many exercise and fitness activities designed to get everyone up and moving.

## Are you ready to get up and get moving?

**S**tudies have shown that older adults who exercise on a regular basis can improve their flexibility, strength, balance, mind/body coordination, mood and more. And now that we’re easing out of COVID-19 lockdowns and into summer, if you’re 50 or older, it’s time to sign up for some summer activities to get you up and moving, and begin planning for autumn fun as well.

Members of the Pasadena Senior Center can join the Sy Graff Fitness Center, which features all-new equipment. Membership is only \$90 per year. Work out on your own under general supervision or sign up with a volunteer certified personal trainer to help you achieve your fitness goals in a safe, nurturing environment. Beginning June 15, the fitness center will be open five days a week.

Fee-based autumn classes will begin Oct. 11. From Acting to Zumba Gold, there’s something for everyone – more than 25 classes, most lasting 10 weeks – in the general categories of dance (tap, BollyX and more), exercise/fitness (strength training, chair aerobics and more) and hobbies/special interests (foreign languages, watercolors and more). All are taught by experienced instructors who are certified in their respective fields. The total cost of each



course generally ranges from \$40 to \$85 for Pasadena Senior Center members and \$50 to \$95 for non-members. Classes are still offered on Zoom, so when you register, tell your friends near and far to sign up for the classes too, because everything is more fun with the buddy system!

The Pasadena Senior Games planned for this summer had to be canceled due to the pandemic, but expect their celebratory return in 2022.

There also are plenty of free activities in person plus via Zoom and online videos. The Scenic Walks Club, Arthritis Exercise Class, Chair Yoga, plus lectures and discussions about healthy eating, nutrition, heart health, balance, living well with certain medical issues and more are all free to members as well as nonmembers of PSC, regardless of city of residency.

Now, what are you waiting for? Get up and get moving!

*For more information about any or all of these activities, visit [pasadenaseniorcenter.org](http://pasadenaseniorcenter.org) or call (626) 795-4331.*

# A civil (housing) war in the city of homes

By Kirk Myers  
Assistant Archivist

Originally laid out in 1874 with the founding of the settlement that was named Pasadena in 1875, Orange Grove Avenue later became nationally known as Pasadena's version of "Millionaires' Row." The 1 ¼ mile stretch from Colorado to Columbia was called the "Mile of Millionaires" and was said to be one of the most beautiful residential streets in America.

But after the Depression began, there was a growing sense that the heyday of the street was over, and some kind of transition would be inevitable.

The *Pasadena Post* reported on April 6, 1936 that a new organization had been formed. "Confronted by the prospect of the invasion by income property construction, including apartments and courts, on Orange Grove Avenue, one of the most widely publicized avenues in America, taxpayers last night formed the South Orange Grove Avenue Protective Association and moved to prevent efforts to commercialize the street."

On September 3, 1941, the *Pasadena Independent* had a banner headline – "FAMOUS AVENUE FACES CHANGE." The article noted that "Opening South Orange Grove avenue to apartment dwellers will be one of the most radical changes and biggest developments in the city's history. It marks the beginning of a new era in this city which has always had the reputation of being a place of home lovers."

On September 22, 1941 the *Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express* observed that a "civil war" was on "in one of the nation's most famous plutocrat colonies" over petitions to re-zone Orange Grove avenue to permit the erection of apartment houses.

"The first skirmish between the millionaires who are fighting for the mansions and the millionaires battling for apartment house modernization on the avenue is scheduled for late this month at a hearing before the Pasadena City



A packed public hearing at the council chamber of the Pasadena City Hall on January 15, 1942. The Pasadena Planning Commission was presented with a 'civil war' over the future of Orange Grove Avenue (now boulevard, in Pasadena) that would not be resolved for another six years.

Planning Commission. The apartment house proponents assert that their petition carries the names of some of the oldest and wealthiest families, representing more than 50 per cent of the frontage involved. But the opposition is none the less pronounced. Re-zoning of Orange Grove avenue has been blocked before and numerous mansion owners are rallying to try to block it again."

A public hearing was held in the City Hall on January 15, 1942. "The council room was filled with wealthy residents divided into two distinct factions, one for and one against changing the district into an apartment house zone." (*Pasadena Independent*, February 25, 1942)

The *Pasadena Star-News* stated that "every seat in the City Hall council chamber was occupied at the meeting as residents of streets adjacent to Orange Grove Avenue also attended the session and participated in the discussion."

The tension at that meeting was evident. The *Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express* observed on January 15, 1942 that homeowners "applauded briskly" and that there were "discreet murmurs of 'bravo'" when Eugene Rouse, "advertising man and president of Town Hall discussion group" addressed the commission: "This is a city of homes," Rouse exclaimed, his voice rising emotionally. "We who live on Orange Grove

avenue don't want them jammed in. I left Chicago because there were too many people there. Let's not kid ourselves that putting in apartment houses is going to beautify Orange Grove avenue or take us back to the good old days."

The Pasadena Planning Commission denied the rezoning petition on February 24, 1942, but on March 3, City Directors reopened the "Orange Grove Zoning Fight." It was described by the *Pasadena Independent* as "one of the toughest problems which has even been plumped into the laps of city directors, it has them completely stymied. Since last summer it has been harassing them."

To the *Independent*, this signaled that "the dignified but determined contest between the two factions of residents in this area is far from settled." And it was.

The fight would go on for years, interrupted by World War II. The zoning study that was undertaken – R-R (Restricted-Residential) – was pronounced by the Property Owners' Committee of Southwest Pasadena to be "probably the longest and most costly zoning study in the history of the United States."

At a public hearing in City Hall six years later on February 5, 1948, "Leet Bissell, speaking for the South Orange Grove



Avenue Association, said that any poll would reveal that the majority of property owners living on the street opposed any change in zoning which would permit what he terms 'three-story monstrosities for the benefit of greedy developers.'" (*Pasadena Star-News*, February 5, 1948)

On April 6, 1948 the *Pasadena Star-News* noted that the sentiment among property owners was still divided about 50-50 over the proposed R-R Zone.

"Edward W. Burns, 1250 South Orange Grove Avenue, chairman of a property-owner committee favoring the R-R zone, testified that only 14 per cent of those who oppose the change of zone do so for the purpose of preserving their homes. 'I am convinced that the others who have signed did so with other purposes in mind, such as the maintenance of boarding houses,' Mr. Burns said."

"Arvin B. Shaw, 315 South Orange Grove Avenue, stated that the avenue had deteriorated over the years and it now needs a shot of new life. He said that the R-R zone would provide this."

"Gene Burton, 1066 South Orange Grove, declared that the large homes on the avenue cannot be economically maintained as single family residences and he predicted that the entire street would become an

avenue of boarding houses unless the new zoning plan is adopted." The opposing faction was not persuaded.

"Henry Braun, president of the South Orange Grove Avenue Association, which for many years has successfully fought off all attempts to disturb the single-family atmosphere of Orange Grove Avenue and Caryl Sheldon, attorney for the association, carried the brunt of the opposition to the R-R zone. "

"Mr. Sheldon reviewed numerous attempts made to change residential use of Orange Grove avenue and said 'thus we see a systematic, carefully developed plan of study whereby non-residents on the avenue are acquiring land, signing petitions for variances, zone changes and generally stirring up unrest in order that they might capitalize of the fine name of South Orange Grove avenue to financially feather their own nests. I do not mean to condemn good old American enterprise nor deny anyone the right to earn an honest dollar but I do not believe that an organized handful of property speculators should be permitted to sabotage the homes of the single-family property owners in this area."

"Mr. Sheldon denied the assertion that Orange Grove Avenue is a boarding house district. He said that it was no different than any other residential street in Pasadena

where any owner may rent three rooms to four paying guests in his house."

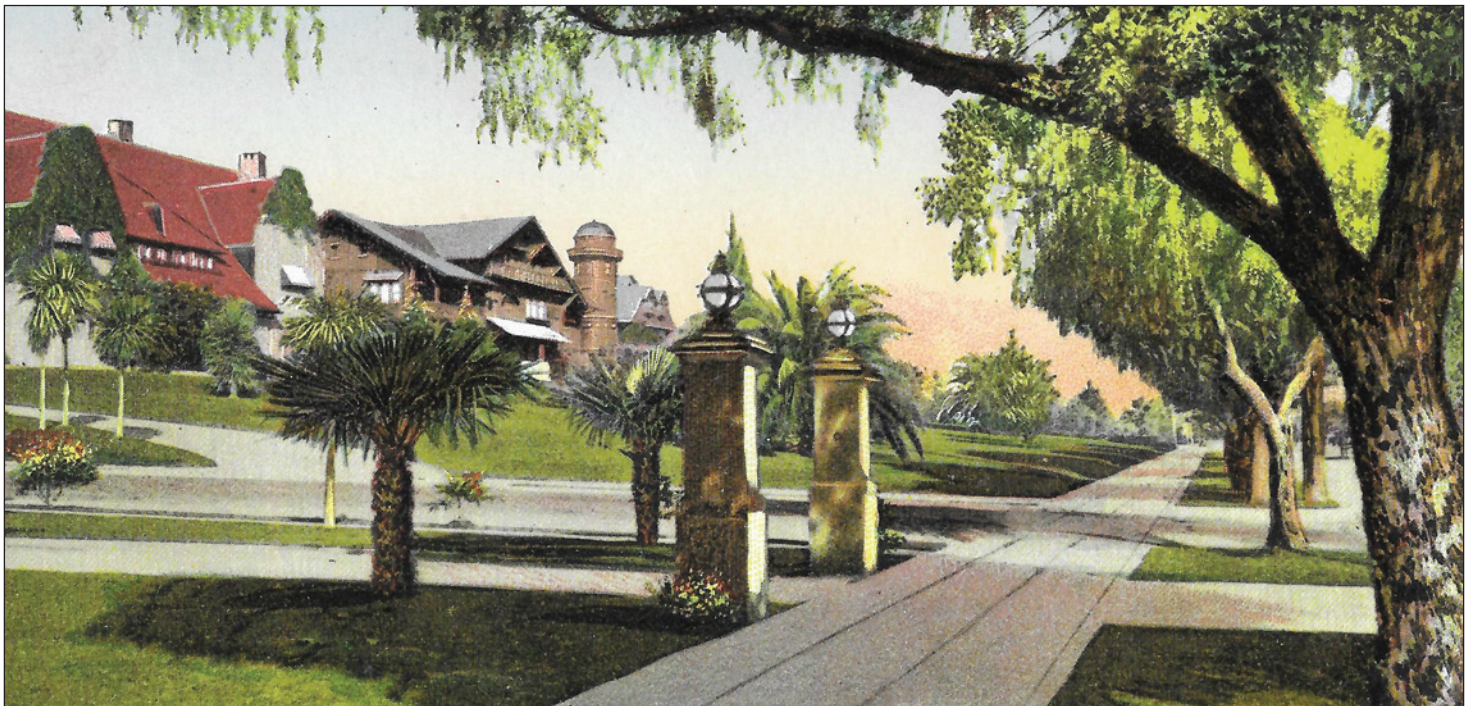
The controversy was finally settled a month later in May, 1948 when the City Planning Commission approved a restricted residential zone for South Orange Grove.

The *Pasadena Star-News* reported on the first new apartments on March 27, 1949:

"Pasadena's famed South Orange Grove avenue, the West's most famous residential thoroughfare, gets the 'new look' next month when construction starts on Lionel V. Mayell's cooperative restricted residences to be known as 'Orange Grove Manor.' Approval was given to plans for five multiple-unit buildings to be erected on a 205x280-foot site on 'Millionaire Row,' 160-184 South Orange Grove avenue, two blocks south of Colorado Street, Tuesday, March 22, following public hearings before the Pasadena City Planning Commission."

Today South Orange Grove Boulevard remains a beautiful residential street, with only a few of the original millionaire mansions left among the apartments constructed since 1948. The controversial battle for its redefinition was a colorful chapter in a story that began in 1874.

*Pasadena Museum of History |*  
[pasadenahistory.org](http://pasadenahistory.org)



In its heyday, South Orange Grove made quite an impression on visitors. "... awe-struck tourists have gazed at its palatial homes, sniffed its orange blossoms, speculated on the aristocratic life within the mansions of 'millionaires' row.'" *Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express*



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Non-emergency.....(626) 744-4241

### City services

Full listing of city phone numbers:  
[cityofpasadena.net/directory](http://cityofpasadena.net/directory)



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### Pasadena

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